

Metraux—Ethnology of Easter Island

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people, both boys and girls, who resided in them for months, generously provided with all sorts of delicacies, but tales seem to indicate that adults also could enjoy the careless life of the *koro* houses. Certain tapus seem to have been enforced on the *koro*, and definite rules were observed in them; no religious ceremonies are mentioned apart from the consecration of the house by an *ariki*. 345 [784]

The host, whose own house was near the *koro*, supervised everything and enjoyed the sight of all the people having a good time. Food was distributed in abundance, and sometimes more than 10 earth ovens were cooking at the same time. The sweet potatoes and chickens which were served during the feast had been accumulated by the owner of the *koro* over a long period of time, and his relatives or friends contributed presents of food, given to him under the condition that some day he would help them on a similar occasion. The last day of the feast was especially gay, and when the rejoicings were over the *koro* house was pulled down with the aid of wooden carved lizards. (See 194, p. 234.) The poles which had been used in the *koro* construction were carefully guarded to be used for the next celebration. 574 [31]

The *koro* houses were supposed to be kept clean. Tradition tells of a *koro* house to which the *ariki* Tuu-ko-ihu was invited and which he left because he saw in it the excrement of a child: 574 514 539

They built a *koro* house in Ahu-a-pepe. They made a very long house. They had yams, sweet potatoes, and chickens. They lit the oven, they threw the food into it and cooked it. They sent a message to Tuu-ko-ihu to call him to this new *koro* where food was ready. A child defecated in the house. The king came and went in and spoke to the owner of the *koro*, "Now take out the food for the king, put in the sugar cane." The head of Oroï was hanging down in the house. Tuu-ko-ihu noticed it and recognized it, "Here is the head of Oroï," he said, "Rest here, your teeth used formerly to eat turtle meat in the foreign country of Marae-renga."

They gathered bananas in the house. Tuu-ko-ihu saw the excrement of the child. He could no longer eat sugar cane, banana, sweet potatoes, chicken, or fish. He got sick because of this excrement. Tuu-ko-ihu took the hanging head and went to his home. The people in the *koro* house said, "The king does not eat the food. Who took the head which was hanging down?" The owner of the *koro* saw the excrement and said, "That's why the king did not eat. Stinking is the excrement of the child." He noticed then that the head was no longer there and that the king had taken it with him.

The owner of the *koro* gathered chickens, fish, tuna fish, and eels, and enlisted the workers to help him to recover the head. They removed the stones, they dug the ground until they reached the house of Tuu-ko-ihu where the head had been buried. They dug everywhere, even under the seat of Tuu-ko-ihu. There they found the head and took it from the king.

The owner was working in a banana plantation. He saw a rat, chased it and digging in the hole of the rat found the skull (again).

AREAUTI

The *areauti* feast, held in fall and winter, was probably similar to the *koro*. For both feasts a special hut was erected, and both were given at the 574 345

526 waves. Today grown men swim only when necessary and never indulge in
[857] surfing. The many volcanic rocks scattered along the coast make this sport extremely dangerous and it can be enjoyed at only a few places.

Owing to the scarcity of wood, the natives formerly used conical bundles of rushes (*papa*) instead of surfboards. Any construction for surfing was described by the phrase *papa mo hakaake te ngaru*. Provided with rafts (*papa*), the young men went into the surf and awaited a big wave (*he irimai te vave nuinui*). When the wave reached its peak (*te iri mai te vave rahi-rahi*), they turned (*te tieve*) to catch the wave, stretching their legs straight behind them. With their hands they seized the *papa* and propelling the board with their feet, they let themselves be swept in to the shore.

Tales refer to young men who had surf-riding contests before big crowds gathered on the beach to admire their skill. Ordinary surf-riders catch the breaking waves, but strong young men of old went far away from the shore into a heavy surf, where they caught great unbroken swells.

526 A song still popular on the island is supposed to have been chanted at
surfing contests as a spell to make opponents fall, but it is also connected with
533 a string figure.

539 E Pua e, e Pua te Ohe Ohe e pua.

Te na ua he tauna
Tera Hiro rangi [Te raa, hirorangi]
Paku, paku
Ruahie hati mai a hati pu.

(A place near the beach of Hangaroa where the children go surf riding.)
There on the top [of the board] is a youth
[The sun, the foam (?)]
The tide is low
Ruahie [a place near Hangaroa], the
(wave) breaks and spends its force.

SLIDING

524 There is a vague tradition that in olden days the boys used to slide on the
857 slopes of the numerous volcanic hills scattered over the island. They sat on
514 banana or ti leaves and slid down tracks on which they had urinated to make the path more slippery.

CONCEALING AN OBJECT

524 Estella (79, p. 25) describes a game which may be ancient. The players crouch or sit in a circle and secretly pass around some object. One player in the center of the circle tries to find the object; and while he is looking for it, he is abused and struck by the rest of the group. If he succeeds in getting hold of the object, he sits in the circle and the person who was discovered takes his place. During the entire game the players in the circle recite a monotonous chant. This last detail seems to indicate the antiquity of the game.